

T W O
L E T T E R S

W R I T T E N B Y

S A M U E L C R I S P,

About the Year 1702,

To some of his Acquaintance, upon
his Change from a Chaplain of the
Church of ENGLAND, to join with
the People called

Q U A K E R S.

1 T H E S. Chap. 5. Verf. 21.

“ Prove all things : hold fast that which is good.”

T H E E L E V E N T H E D I T I O N.

L O N D O N :

Printed and Sold by J A M E S P H I L L I P S,
in George - Yard, Lombard - Street.

M. DCC. LXXXIV.

1607/5760.



FIRST LETTER.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I Received a letter from thee, the week before last, which was sent by thy uncle Bolton ; there were a great many kind expressions in it, and in thy sister Clopton's likewise. I acknowledge myself much obliged to you both, and to the whole family, for many repeated kindnesses ; and if my school had not engrossed so much of my time, I would have taken opportunity to answer my dear friend's letter ere now, and upon that account my delay will be the more excusable.

The news thou hast heard of my late change is really true ; I cannot conceal it, for it is what I glory in : neither was it any prospect of temporal advantage that induced me to it, but a sincere love to the truth, and pure regard to my

own soul. Neither can I be sufficiently thankful to God, that he hath let me live to this glorious day, and not cut me off in the midst of my sins and provocations against him ; he is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance : he hath brought me off from the forms and shadows of religion, and let me see in a more illustrious manner, what is the life and substance of it. As he found me, in some degree, faithful to that measure of light and knowledge he had bestowed on me, whilst I was in the communion of the church of England, therefore he was pleased of late, as I humbly waited upon him, to make known to me greater and deeper mysteries of his kingdom ; and I can truly say, that I find by daily experience, as I keep low and retired into that pure gift which he hath planted within me, things are every day more and more cleared up to me, and the truth shines and prevails greatly over the kingdom of darkness ; and if I should now turn my back upon such manifestations as these, and entangle myself again with the yoke of bondage, surely

surely I should grieve the Holy Spirit, so that he might justly withdraw his kind operations, and never return more to assist and comfort me : for God is not mocked ; religion is a very serious and weighty thing ; repentance and salvation are not to be trifled with, nor is turning to God to be put off till our own time, leisure, or conveniency ; but we must love and cherish the least appearance of Christ, not slighting or despising the day of small things, but embrace the first opportunity of following Christ in any of his commands : when he speaks, there is such force and authority in it, that we cannot stand to cavil, dispute, or ask questions ; for unless we will be so obstinate as to shut our eyes against the sun, we must needs confess to the truth of his doctrine, and presently strike in with it : and therefore, when for several weeks I had lived more privately and retiredly in London, than was usual, fasting twice or thrice in a week, or sometimes more, spending my time in reading the scriptures, and in prayer to God ; this was a good preparation of my mind to receive the truth which he was then about to make known

to me : I lamented the errors of my past life, and was desirous to attain a more excellent degree of holiness than I had discovered in the church of England. In this religious retirement God knew the breathings of my soul, how sincere I was, and resigned to him when alone : I wanted him to set me free, and to speak peace and comfort to my soul, which was grieved and wearied with the burden of sin : for though I had strictly conformed myself to the orders and ceremonies of the church of England, and had kept myself from running into any great and scandalous enormities, the fear of the Almighty preserving me, yet still I had not that rest and satisfaction in myself which I desired, and greatly longed for : I found, when I had examined my state and condition to Godward, that things were not right with me.

As for a sober and plausible conversation in the eye of the world, I knew that was a very easy attainment : a good natural temper, with the advantage of a liberal education, will quickly furnish a man with abilities for that ; so that he
shall

shall be looked upon as a saint, and very spiritual, when perhaps in chains of darkness, in the gall of bitterness, and in the very bond of iniquity. If this sort of righteousness would have done, perhaps I might make as fair pretensions that way as some others ; but, alas ! I quickly saw the emptiness and unsatisfactoriness of those things ; this is a covering that will not protect or hide us from the wrath of the Almighty when he comes to judgment. It is not a man's natural temper, nor his education, that makes him a good Christian ; this is not the righteousness which the gospel calls for, nor is this the truth in the inward parts which God requires ; the heart and affections must be cleansed and purified before we can be acceptable to God : therefore it was death to me, to think of taking up my rest in a formal pretence of holiness, wherein yet I saw, to my grief, abundance of people wrapt themselves, slept securely and quietly, dreaming of the felicity of paradise, as if heaven was now their own, and they needed not trouble themselves any more about religion. I could not entertain so dangerous an opinion as

this; for then I should be tempted to take up my rest by the way, whilst I was travelling towards the promised land. I think I made a little progress in a holy life, and through God's assistance, I weakened some of my spiritual enemies, whilst I lived in the communion of the national church. I thank my God, I can truly say, whilst I used those prayers, I did it with zeal and sincerity, in his fear and dread: but still I ceased not my earnest supplication to him in private, that he would shew me something more excellent, that I might get a complete victory over all my lusts and passions, and might perfect righteousness before him; for I found a great many sins and weaknesses daily attending me: and though I made frequent resolutions to forsake those sins, yet still the temptation was too strong for me, so that often I had cause to complain with the apostle, in the bitterness of my soul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Who shall set me free, and give me strength to triumph over sin, the world, and the devil, that I may in every thing please God, and there
may

may not be the least thought, word, motion, gesture, or action, but what is exactly agreeable to his most holy will, as if I saw him standing before me, and as if I were to be judged by him for the thought of my heart next moment ? O divine life ! O seraphick soul ! O that I could always stand here ! for here is no reflection, no sorrow, no repentance ; but at God's right hand there is perfect peace, and a river of unspeakable joy. O that we might imitate the life of Jesus, and be thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work !

This was the frequent breathing of my soul to God, when I was in the country ; but more especially after I had left my new preferment of a chaplain, and took private lodgings in London : in this retirement, I hope I may say without boasting, that I was very devout and religious, and I found great comfort and refreshment in it from the Lord ; who let me see the beauty of holiness, and the sweetness that arises from an humbled, mortified life, was then very pleasant to my taste, and I rejoiced

rejoiced in it more than all the delights and pleasures of the world.

And now it pleased God to shew me, that if I would indeed live strictly and holily, as becomes the gospel, then I must leave the communion of the church of England ; but I knew not yet which way to determine myself, nor to what body of men I should join, who were more orthodox and more regular in their lives. As for the Quakers, so called, I was so great a stranger to them, that I had never read any of their books, nor do I remember, that ever I conversed with any one man of their communion in my whole life : I think there was one in Foxley, while I was curate there, but I never saw the man, though I went several times to his house on purpose to talk with him, and to bring him off from his mad and wild enthusiasm, as I then ignorantly thought it to be : as for that way, I knew it was every where spoken against ; he that had a mind to appear more witty and ingenious than the rest, would choose this for the subject of his profane jests and drollery ; with this he makes sport, and diverts the

the company ; for a Quaker is but another name for a fool or a mad-man, and was scarce ever mentioned, but with scorn and contempt. As for drollery, I confess, I was never any great friend to it ; but indeed, if all was true that was laid to the Quakers charge, I thought that they were some of the worst people that ever appeared in the world ; and wondered with what face they could call themselves Christians, since I was told they denied the fundamental articles of the holy faith, to which I ever bore the highest veneration and esteem ; and notwithstanding I had always lived at the greatest distance from that people, and was very zealous in the worship of the church of England, and upon all occasions would speak very honourably of it ; moreover, was content to suffer some few inconveniences upon that account, as thou very well knowest, yet my father still looked upon me as inclining to the Quakers ; and some years ago signified to a friend, he was afraid I would become an enthusiast ; and, whilst I was at Bungan school, he sent me two books to read that were written against the Quakers,

one

one of which was John Faldo's, who hath been sufficiently exposed for it by William Penn.

Whilst I lived in London, in that private retired manner I was just now speaking of, walking very humbly in the sight of God, and having opportunity to reflect upon my past life ; as I had occasion to be one day at a book-seller's shop, I happened to cast my eye on Barclay's works ; and having heard in the country, that he was a man of great account amongst the Quakers, I had a mind to see what their principles were, and what defence they could make for themselves ; for sure, thought I, these people are not so silly and ridiculous, nor maintainers of such horrid opinions as the author of the Snake, and some others, would make us believe. I took Barclay home with me, and I read him through in a week's time, save a little treatise at the end, which finding it to be very philosophical, I omitted ; but, however, I soon read enough to convince me of my own blindness and ignorance of the things of God ; there I found a light to break in upon my
mind,

mind, which did mightily refresh and comfort me, in that poor, low, and humble state, in which I then was; for indeed I was, and had been for a considerable time before, very hungry and thirsty after righteousness, and therefore I received the truth with all readiness of mind: it was like balm to my soul, and as showers of rain to the thirsty earth, which is parched with heat and drought. This author laid things down so plainly, and proved them with such ingenuity and dexterity of learning, and opened the scriptures so clearly to me, that, without standing to cavil, dispute, raise argument or objection, or consulting with flesh and blood, I presently resigned myself to God, and weeping for joy that I had found so great a treasure, I often thanked him with tears in my eyes for so kind a visitation of his love, that he was graciously pleased to look toward me when my soul cried after him; so that, though before I was in great doubt and trouble of mind, not knowing which way to determine myself, yet now the sun breaking out so powerfully upon me, the clouds were scattered; I was now fully satisfied in my own mind
which

which way I ought to go, and to what body of people I should join myself.

So I immediately left the communion of the church of England, and went to Grace-church-street meeting. After I had read Barclay, I read some other books of that kind, among which was an excellent piece, though in a small volume, called, No Cross, No Crown. Thus I continued reading, and frequenting meetings for several weeks together, but did not let any one soul know what I was about: the first man I conversed with was George Whitehead, and this was several weeks after I began to read Barclay, and frequent their meetings: by him I was introduced into more acquaintance, and still the farther I went, the more I liked their plainness, and the decency and simplicity of their conversation: they do not use the ceremonies and salutations of the church of England, but shake hands freely, and converse together as brothers and sisters that are sprung of the same royal seed, and made kings and priests unto God. O! the love, the sweetness and tenderness of affection I have seen amongst this people!

people! "By this, says Christ, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another," John xii. 35. "Put on therefore," says the apostle, "as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering," Col. iii. 12.

Thus, my dear friend, I have given thee an account of my proceedings on this affair. As to my bodily state, if thou desired to know what it is, I may acquaint thee, that I have my health as well as ever, and I bless God I have food and raiment sufficient for me, so that I want no outward thing; and I have the necessaries and conveniences of life liberally. Let us not burden ourselves with taking care for the vanities and superfluities of it; let us "possess our vessels in sanctification and honour," 1 Thess. iv. 4. And as we bring our minds into perfect subjection to the whole will of God, so let us bring our bodies to the most simple and natural way of living, being content with the fewest things, never studying to gratify our wanton appetite, nor to follow the customs

customs and humours of men, but how we may so contract our earthly cares and pleasures, that we may bring most glory to God, most health and peace to our own souls, and do most service to the truth ; and if this be our aim, certainly a very small portion of the things of this world will suffice us. Seeing we are Christians, we should therefore earnestly pursue those things which bring us nearest to God, and which are most perfective of human nature ; for what is more than a competency, seems to be a burden to a generous philosophical soul, which would breathe in a pure vehicle, that so it may have a quick sense and relish of all blessings, both of the superior and inferior worlds.

Thou knowest, my dear friend, that religion is a very serious thing, and repentance is a great work, and one precious immortal soul is of more worth than ten thousand perishing worlds, with all their pomp and glory : therefore let us take courage, and be valiant for the truth upon the earth ; let us not content ourselves with a name and profession of godliness ; let us come to the life and
power

power of it ; let us not despond of getting the victory : we have a little strength for God ; let us be faithful to him, and he will give us more strength, so that we shall see the enemy of our peace fall before us, and nothing shall be impossible unto us. I say, my friend, let us be faithful to that measure of light and knowledge which God has given to us, to be profited and edified by it in a spiritual life ; and as God sees we are diligent and faithful to work with the strength we have, he will more and more enlighten us, so that we shall see to the end of those forms and shadows of religion wherein we have formerly lived : but if he sees we are about to take up our rest in those shadows ; that we grow cold and indifferent in the pursuit of holiness ; running out into notions and speculation, and have more mind to dispute, and to make a shew of learning and subtilty, than to lead a holy and devout life ; then it is just with God to leave us in a carnal and polluted state, to continue yet but in the outward court ; where we may please ourselves with beholding the beauty and ornaments of a worldly sanctuary, and never

B.

witness

witness the evil being taken away, and that we are brought by the blood of Jesus Christ into the holiest of all, where alone there is true peace with God, and rest to the weary soul. I could say much upon this head, if time or leasure would give leave.

As for a particular answer to thy letter, I have not time now to give it ; and for the present let this general answer suffice ; and if thou wilt consider things in their pure abstracted nature, and not suffer the prejudice of education to sway thee, but in fear and humility wilt search out the truth for thyself, thou wilt find that there needs no other answer to thy letter than what I have already given. For by waiting upon God, and diligently seeking him, thou wilt find an answer to it in thy own bosom, and this will be much more full, clear, and satisfactory than I, or any other man living, can pretend to give thee, or any other friend who hath lovingly wrote to me ; for whom I desire, with all the sincere-hearted in the church of England, that they may come to witness the almighty power of God to save and redeem them

them from every yoke ; and that they may clearly see to the end of those things which are abolished, and come to the enjoyment of spiritual and heavenly things themselves, is the daily prayer and deep travail of my soul, God knoweth. 'Till I can be more particular, if thou please thou mayest communicate this to them, and let them know that I am well, and thank them for their kind letters. Let us remember to pray for one another with all fervency, that we may stand perfect in the whole will of God. Amen, faith my soul.

I am thy most affectionate friend and servant in Jesus,

SAMUEL CRISP.

SECOND LETTER.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I Lately received a kind and brotherly letter from thee, for which I return thee many thanks. I am now in the communion of the people called Quakers; and I have cause to bless God for this happy change of my life: I am, through mercy, brought off from the shadow of religion, and am pressing forwards to get acquaintance with the quickening power, life, and virtue of it, that I may be a Christian indeed, and not in the name and profession only. I had a great while talked and discoursed of holiness, but did not understand what it was to walk with God, to live and dwell in him. Perhaps indeed some may think I made a fair shew of piety when I was with you: but alas! I was deeply sensible of my own faults and miscarriages; and I resolved, through
 God's

God's assistance, to enquire after something more noble and excellent than I had discovered in that state ; and blessed be his name for ever, that God hath answered the cry of my soul, and let me see a people that are hated and despised by the world, but are dear to him ; for he hath revealed to them the mysteries of the kingdom ; he hath carried them upon eagles wings, and cherished them as the apple of his eye. As for me, I have been yet but in the outward court, and far short of that truth and righteousness that is taught and practised among this people ; for they are come within the holiest of all ; they are come into a near communion with God, to behold the cherubims of glory that cover the mercy-seat, to be fed with the true manna. These are mysteries that are revealed unto the meek and lowly ; but the haughty, insolent, and prophane, cannot come near them, nor taste of the sweetness nor comfort of them. Indeed the formal, traditional sort of people of the world may talk of these things, as they have heard them from others, and in their sober minutes may have some faint glimmerings that way ; but to come to

real and inward enjoyment of them, they can no more pretend to, than to work the greatest impossibilities : all their wit, and subtilty, and learning, cannot reach higher to handle of the word of life ; this is peculiar only to those who are content to forsake all, and become fools for Christ ; they are those who are in a good temper to receive and co-operate with the influences of the Holy Spirit, and have seen the emptiness and vanity of all those things that are so much admired by the world. The schools, and universities, and learned doctors, and great rabbies, have not profited me ; they are ravened from the spirit of God, and gone out into their own notions and speculations, thinking thereby to search out God, and comprehend the truth. Alas ! the mysteries of the kingdom are far out of their reach in their carnal minds ; they weary themselves in vain ; the vulture's eye cannot pierce into these secrets ; all the great critics, scholars, and philosophers of the world, are fools in these things ; and whilst they are wearying themselves to find the deep things of our God, studying and racking their heads, tossing
and

and tumbling to and fro like a wild bull in a net, that knows not which way to disintangle himself; the more he struggles, the weaker he grows, the faster he is bound; so the more these vain talkers read, the more they write; the more they cavil and dispute; the farther they are from God; and the more they declare their hatred and enmity to the spirit of Christ, and to the simplicity of the gospel. I have been a long time weary of the folly and impertinency of these men, and chiefly the celebrated fathers of the church, as they call them; the councils and synods of old are now of very small account with me. I am not ashamed to sit under the teachings of women and mechanics, howsoever they may seem in the eye of the world, for they teach me more Christianity, and instruct me more perfectly in a divine life, than all the studied, elaborated sermons and discourses that ever I heard at the universities, or since; their words are with power, they are mightily assisted with the spirit of God, they speak with majesty and authority, and there is a native beauty, clearness, and solidity of expression, that shines through their

B 4

discourses,

discourses, which is sufficient to answer that groundless calumny, viz. the Quakers preaching is nonsense, and no body could understand them. This I have heard often refuted by many living testimonies, so that I do rather think them the best wits, and the most ingenious people in the world; for they employ their parts and learning in the fear of God, to his glory and service, and to promote the true interest of mankind. As for the little jests, wittinefs, and vain pedantry of the age, which I know the world hath esteem for, and nothing will please but what abounds with such fooleries; I say, if the Quakers be deficient in any of these, it is not for want of abilities, or because they have less wit than other men, but because they have more prudence and wisdom to govern it; and that is the reason why they avoid such childish vanities, which are so freely used and indulged by others, to the great dishonour of God, and the Christian religion; and therefore, because they do not seek to please a wanton age, and make people laugh and be merry, nor to entertain that carnal airy mind with pleasant stories,

stories, fine notions, and witty expressions of natural things ; from thence it is that they have been shamefully traduced by the world, as the most ignorant, blind, and foolish people that ever made any profession of religion ; and yet this is the people to whom I have now joined myself in a sincere love to truth, God knoweth ; and I glory more in this fellowship and acquaintance with these lambs of Christ, than if I were related to the greatest kings, lords, and potentates upon the earth. Oftentimes hath my spirit been refreshed with theirs, when we have met together to wait upon God ; and my soul still longs and pants more and more to be filled with these divine comforts ; he is ready always to pour down blessings upon us, if we would qualify ourselves for the reception of them ; if we would put away vain thoughts, which cloud and darken the mind, and so hinder the favourable influences and irradiations of heaven. And since it hath pleased God to visit me of late, and to make known to me excellent things in righteousness, he alone is to have the praise and glory of all ; and now I freely resign myself to
the

the conduct of the blessed spirit ; now let the truth prosper, now let it run and be glorified in the earth, let it shine out in its full lustre, to the terror and confusion of all the enemies thereof ; and to the reviving of the souls of the hungry and thirsty, who are ready to faint, waiting for and expecting the consolation of Israel, until the time of refreshment comes from the presence of the Lord ; who will open a fountain for Judah and Jerusalem, so that rivers shall run in dry places ; there will he speak peace to his people ; and after they have sat silent a little while in the dust, suffering patiently the chastising rod of his love to pass over them, he shall then comfort the daughter of Sion, and say, " Arise, thou afflicted, and weep and mourn no more, but put on thy beautiful garments." O Jerusalem ! raise thy head, uncover thy face, and gird up thy loins with strength, see the day break, and the morning spread itself upon the mountains ; now the sorrowful nights of affliction are gone over, the clouds are scattered and gone, the sun is risen in its brightness, and now joy and peace shall be multiplied ; " in a little wrath I hid

I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." O ! let us wait in humility of soul, and tenderness of heart, before the Lord, that we may witness this great change and salvation wrought in us and for us ; that the scripture may be no more a sealed book to us, but that we may feel the precious truth therein recorded, to be fulfilled in our own particulars. Then we shall never be weary of praying, and reading the Holy Scriptures ; we shall never be loth or unwilling to come into God's presence ; for his love, and the sweetness of his ointment, will draw and allure us to dwell always under his canopy, that we may feel life and power to flow from him, who is the ocean that supplies all the wants of the children of men : and how shall we come to taste of that heavenly banquet he hath prepared for us, that we may eat and drink at his table, and that our souls may delight in fatness ; I say, how shall we attain to this, but by a strict and mortified life ? Certainly the more we retire from worldly joys, and empty ourselves of earthly comforts

comforts and false delights, the fitter we shall be to receive those that are spiritual and heavenly ; and not only to receive and rejoice in them for a time, but to live and dwell in them for ever, for this is the life of Jesus ; and here the kingdom of God reigns in the heart and soul, by which it is changed from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.

And now I would ask all the wise and prudent, all the rich, all the noble, and learned men of the world, what they think of these things ? Whether this is to be learned in their courts and palaces ? Or whether any of the great scholars and universities in Christendom can furnish us with such a system of divinity as this ? No, they hate it, and despise it, and instead of a sober answer to my query, they return scoffs and contempt. This is canting, they say, and an idle dream, and forged chimera of my own brain, and a great many more opprobrious names they have for such inquiries as these. Sometimes perhaps they will soften the expression with an hypocritical shew, will pretend to
pity

pity me, calling it an unhappy effect of melancholy, and too much retirement from the world ; and this they think too much condescension, that I ought to think myself beholden to them for giving it so mild a character ; for at other times they deal more sharply, and say confidently, that it is madness, delusion, witchcraft, and diabolical enthusiasm ; but I am content to lie under all these odious imputations from the world, knowing very well, that better men than I have suffered the same things before me, and do at this present time. As for my enemies, I can truly say, I thank God I pity them, and pray for them : they do not hurt me, but themselves. And now, my dear Friend, before I conclude, suffer me a little to speak of thy present circumstances ; for as God knoweth, my bowels yearn towards thee in the tender love of Jesus. I suppose thou art now where I left thee, viz. with the lord Richardson, so called, in the capacity of a chaplain ; an office which I have had a little experience of myself, since I last saw thee ; but was quickly so weary of that servile yoke, so unworthy of that holy function I bore,

bore, that in ten days time I quitted my new preferment, and left it more freely than ever I undertook it. What peace or satisfaction thou canst have in such kind of employment I know not; for my part, I could find none; my soul was grieved and burthened every day with seeing and hearing their evil deeds, beholding their vanities and excesses; this was a sword to my soul and spirit, it wounded me very deep: and I do solemnly profess, I had rather beg my bread from door to door, than to live in the like bondage again, where I must be obliged to such ceremonies and formalities, to flatter men in their sins, to cry Peace, peace; and to sow pillows under the arm-holes of delicate people, that can never bear the least check or frown; but expect the mercenary priest should always laugh or smile in their faces, even when he sees plainly they are going to hell and destruction. And yet I must tell thee, the family I was in, was looked upon as one of the most sober and regular, as the world goes now; and I must needs say, I did not leave them for any drinking, gaming, swearing, or whoring, that I perceived
amongst

amongst them ; in all these filthy, scandalous practices, as far as I could see, they were blameless ; but yet I saw their hearts were not right ; for they were lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God ; and thou knowest that he or they, let them be great or small, if they live in pleasures, grow fat and wanton against Christ, such persons are dead whilst they live ; I say, whatever their faith, or principles, or professions may be, yet in religion they are dead. I shall say no more, but hasten to a conclusion. If thou desire a particular account of my convincement, thou mayst see it in a letter which I wrote lately to Richard Lake, junior, wherein I gave him a fair and true relation of my proceedings in that matter, what steps I took, and how God did graciously assist me, when he had raised in me sincere desires and enquiries after truth and holiness. Dear Friend, I have no more at present, but to let thee know, I do most heartily pray for thee, that thou mayst consider things without prejudice, and not suffer any of the temptations and allurements of the world to draw thy mind from God, and to hinder thee in thy pursuit
of

of holiness. He that loves father or mother, brother or sister, or any of the endearments of this world, more than Christ, is not worthy of him; but if thou wilt come into communion with Christ, and chiefly to follow the guidance of his light and spirit, O what a blessed and happy rest shalt thou find to thy soul! O what rivers of living waters will spring up in thee! of which thou mayst drink freely, and praise God for all his mercies and benefits. That thou mayst indeed come to such spiritual enjoyments and refreshments as these, is the sincere desire of .

Thy loving and affectionate friend,

SAMUEL CRISP.

F I N I S.

